

[0035] This kit **10** and the associated method enhance safety for all involved and save time. The improved safety and timesavings are due primarily to three important features. First, the skin-preparation package is immediately accessible upon opening the kit **10** (or even before). This avoids the need to perform additional unpacking of the kit before the skin preparation package is accessed and applied. This in turn allows the prescribed drying time to begin sooner. Furthermore, there is no requirement that the skin-preparation package be poured into a subtray and then a swab doused or anything else of that nature. Thus, the swab of the current design may be administered immediately and it can be drying while the rest of the contents of the kit are accessed. Second, once inside kit **10**, the syringes are preloaded with the anesthesia and test doses to be used. This provides timesavings in not having to break open glass vials and apply any filtering needles or to take the time to aspirate the proper amount of substance into each syringe. Finally, the pre-loaded cup **34** allows for a fluid, such as saline, to be quickly accessed and to be readily aspirated without even the need for a needle and does not pose any risk of glass shards. As shown by the chart below, these three features combine to improve the time involved in the procedure. The features may be used alone as well to great advantage.

[0036] While clinical testing of the kit has not yet been performed, the timesavings are estimated to be on the order shown in the chart below.

Step	Estimated Time Savings for an Epidural
1. Immediate access of skin-prep	1 min.
2. Pre-loaded Local	30 sec.–1 min.
3. Pre-filled saline cup	15–30 sec.
3. Pre-loaded Test dose	30 sec.
4. Pre-loaded Load Dose	20–30 sec.
Total	2:35–3:30 minutes

[0037] Thus, the estimated timesavings are up to 3 and half minutes per epidural block administered. Given that operating rooms can be as expensive as \$30 to \$80 a minute, this represents significant money savings to the hospital. More importantly, in the case of the laboring woman, it represents quicker pain relief. Finally, for the healthcare provider, it allows more efficient and safer deliver of epidural anesthesia.

[0038] Although the present invention and its advantages have been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions and alterations can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of invention as defined by the appended claims. As one example, the skin preparation package **28** of FIG. 2 could be located and attached on the exterior of sealing sheet **24** or exterior of outer tray **12** so that it could be accessed even before top sealing-sheet **24** is removed. While the invention is envisioned for use with, and is particularly well suited for, epidural anesthesia, it might find application with other procedures and kits as well.

What is claimed is:

1. An epidural kit for quickly administering epidural anesthesia to a patient, the kit comprising:

a packaging towel;

a skin preparation package containing a skin-preparation solution and means for delivering the fluid to the patient's skin, the skin preparation package is ready to be opened and used to prepare a patient's skin for penetration by needles;

a first syringe pre-filled with a local anesthetic;

an epidural needle for locating an epidural space of a patient;

a catheter for positioning in the epidural space of a patient through the epidural needle;

a second syringe pre-filled with a test fluid;

a preloaded saline cup having a removable lid and filled with a saline solution;

a tray for holding and removeably securing the first and second syringes, the epidural needle, and the cup;

a packaging means for enclosing the tray in a sterile environment; and

wherein the skin-preparation package is removeably secured relative to the packaging means to allow access to the skin-preparation package without requiring the packaging towel to be unfolded.

2. The kit of claim 1 wherein the packaging means comprises an outer tray with a top sheet.

3. The kit of claim 1 wherein the packaging means comprises an outer tray and a top sheet and wherein the skin-preparation package is removeably secured to an outer portion of the packaging towel where it is immediately available once the top sheet has been removed from the outer tray.

4. The kit of claim 1 wherein the packaging means comprises an outer tray and a top sheet and wherein the skin-preparation package is removeably secured to an exterior surface of the top sheet.

5. The kit of claim 1 wherein the first pre-filled syringe comprises a pre-filled syringe with a needle attached.

6. An anesthesia kit comprising:

an outer tray having a top portion and an interior portion;

a packaging towel having an interior and an exterior and disposed within the interior portion of the outer tray;

a plurality of syringes disposed within the outer tray and on the interior of the packaging towel; and

a skin-preparation package removeably secured to the exterior of the packaging towel to provide for access to the skin-preparation package without requiring the packaging towel to be unfolded.

7. The kit of claim 6 further comprising a cup disposed within the outer tray and on the interior of the packaging towel that has a removeable, sealed lid and that is filled with an injectable fluid.

8. The kit of claim 6 further comprising a cup disposed within the outer tray and on the interior of the packaging towel that has a removeable, sealed lid and is filled with saline.

9. The kit of claim 6 wherein the plurality of syringes comprise a pre-filled syringe with a local anesthetic and a pre-filled syringe with a test dose.

10. The kit of claim 6 further comprising: a cup disposed within the outer tray and on the interior of the packaging towel